

**FROM ABOVE AND BEYOND:
New Perspectives in
Contemporary Landscape.**

Melissa Doherty, Alex MacLean, Taiji Matsue, Lucas Monaco, Ross Racine,
and Sarah Trigg

September 4 - October 18, 2008

Cristinerose Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of From Above and Beyond: New Perspectives in Contemporary Landscape, a group exhibition of artists who revisit landscape through photography, painting and drawing. Instead of looking outward at the frontier space in the grand tradition of landscape painting, the works in the exhibition look down at and beyond the spaces prescribed and sometimes manipulated by the artist's view of the world and its territories.

The works in the exhibition combine elements of representation and abstraction, grid and pattern, memory and illusion, observation and imagination. Whether hovering above structured towns or colorful countryside, harbors and highways or tidal basins and mountain ranges, all of the artists examine the relationships between the man-made and the natural, urban and rural, and the worlds of power, labor, appropriation, identity and leisure carrying social, political, geological, historical messages. **Sarah Trigg** addresses disasters both natural and man-made and how they affect the land and its inhabitants. Her paintings are inspired by news headlines. Images of events both man-made (i.e. bombs, glacial drilling) and natural (i.e. hurricanes, algae blooms) which marked the earth's surface on a chosen date are collated into a single, multilayered view, projecting the physical and spiritual tensions between a technologized culture and the natural landscape.

Melissa Doherty's paintings are a careful depiction of the geometric structures of urban greenery. The landscape is seen from a near-perpendicular perspective, so that all sense of volume is lost from the landscape in favor of the geometry of roofs and the strange vitality of vegetation extending to the edge of the composition. It is as if these organized zones, isolated on a pallid background but for the occasional road that ends abruptly at the edges of the painting, form a critique of our expectations of and interventions in nature, and of how we structure our territories. It is a social topography; the aerial point of view brings to mind the highly topical question of how territories are kept under surveillance and appropriated. Doherty offers us a simultaneous sense of comfort and isolation, prodding us to confront our expectations of the landscapes and the interventions we inflict on it.

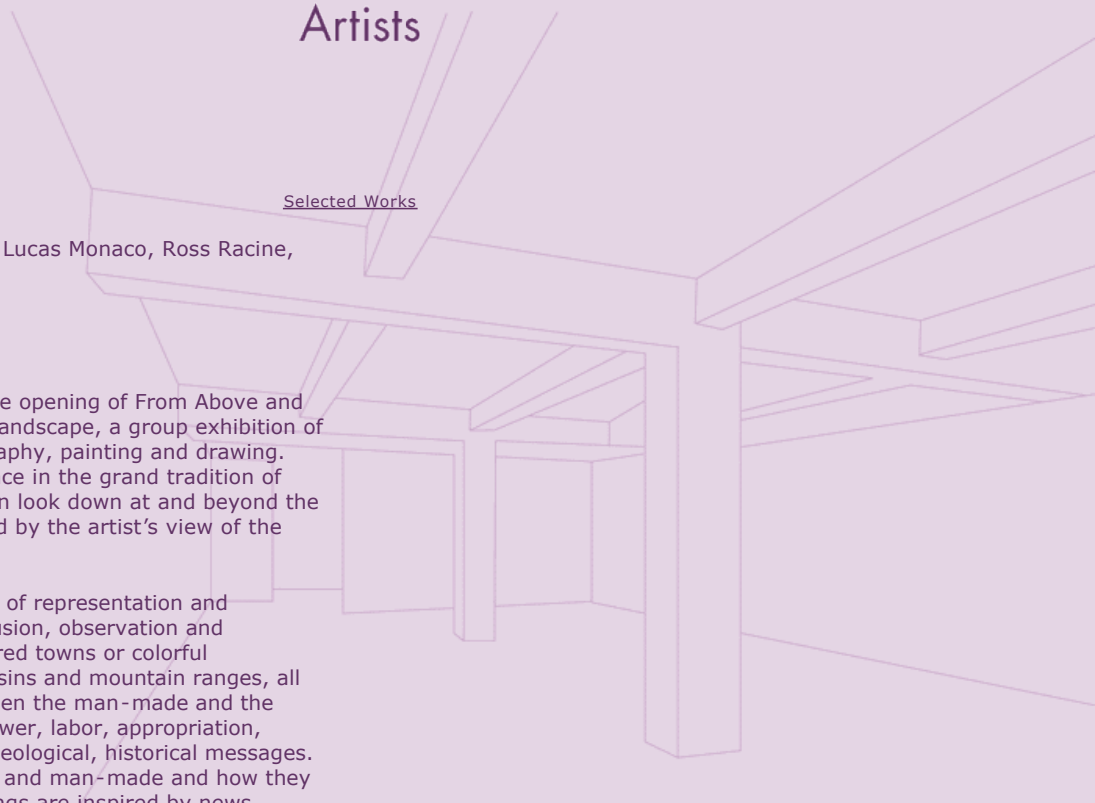
Lucas Monaco's drawings chronicle the histories of selected landscapes by using the map as motif. The ideas of individuals and communities that have left their mark on a city and the architectural and physical structures there that have persisted over time are combined with the impressions left by political and economic influences to form a cohesive unit. The mixture of patterns and visual events constructs a plane integrating both random and rational development. Urban planning and development, architecture, and the role of socio-economic and community trends in forming an environment are the subjects of his work, as they play the dual role of formal picture-making and individual concerns about the broad public landscape.

Ross Racine's freehand drawings, created directly on the computer, can be interpreted equally as models for planned communities or as aerial views of fictional suburbs, reflecting the dual role of the computer as a tool for urban planning and image capture. Encouraging a reflective attitude by its perpendicular and distant viewpoint, the aerial view is used to comment on human occupation and transformation of the natural landscape. In addition, the obviously invented nature of these suburbs exaggerates existing situations and explores the investigative domain of science fiction. Examining the relation between design and actual lived experience, the works subvert the apparent rationality of urban design, exposing conflicts that lie beneath the surface. These digital drawings are a commentary on the dreams and fear of suburban culture.

The duality between aesthetics and utility is consciously exploited by **Alex MacLean** and **Taiji Matsue**, who, in their own distinct ways, work to create aesthetic imagery out of raw topographical data in order to pose questions related to perception, the environment, and human industry.

Alex MacLean's aerial photographs capture the human transformation of

[Selected Works](#)



the environment. He manipulates landscape elements into abstracted, two dimensional forms, uncovering in the process nature's logic, scale, and complexity.

Taiji Matsue evokes the impression of aerial photographs to create visual separation between the observer and the subject. He is fascinated by the epidermis of the earth that is revealed as a collage of organic and artificial structures. However, his visions of the landscape are neither spectacular nor picturesque. They refuse to dramatize the moment or the view.